

## **ABSTRACT**

A system and method for managing a plurality of server nodes. In one embodiment, the server nodes are organized as "instances." Each instance includes a group of redundant server processes (e.g., J2EE server nodes) and a dispatcher process (e.g., a J2EE dispatcher node) for distributing service requests to one or more of the server nodes. In addition, a central message passing architecture is defined which allows the various instances to communicate with one another. In one embodiment, a hierarchical configuration data object is stored within a database and is centrally accessible by all of the servers from all of the instances. The hierarchical configuration data object organizes configuration data and binary data in a logical hierarchy which simplifies server node management in an enterprise network. At the bottom of the logical hierarchy, configuration parameters are stored within a property sheet data structure. Each configuration parameter is represented within the property sheet data structure by a property name, a default parameter and a custom parameter. Even when a custom configuration parameter is entered in the property sheet, the default parameter is preserved.